

LIANA BADR

escaping, albeit temporarily, from the smells of poisonous gas bombs, and the garbage and waste, which has not been collected because of the curfew. Attempting to flee, if only for a moment, from our houses that have become our prisons. Expending most of our energy through our steps placed in the direction of the open air, so that we might forget how many incessant announcements are repeated around us at all hours of the night or day. Trying to ensure that, despite everything, our fundamental dreams of a different life are not shaken from our souls. As if that excursion of ours were no more than a break from all the instructions and orders that have been instilled in us and imposed upon us, like cages of chain mail.

Merely perhaps . . . in order that we peek out between the solid bars of our prison, between one prohibition and another, at another blue patch of the sky of Palestine.

A sky that looks down on mountainous lands encircled by the ancient dry-stone walls that have prevented the earth from crumbling and collapsing since the times of the Romans and Phoenicians. A vast expanse, and over its hills spread the stone huts, like miniature fortresses, their rough stones forming houses to protect the crops and sheep of farmers since times long past, and forgotten by subsequent generations.

Under the shadows of the clouds, ceaselessly wandering above the eternally recurring summits, emerge from time to time the fortifications of Israeli military positions surrounded by barbed wire, ready to assume their roles in the conversion of our agricultural land into colonial settlements.

Looking from the West, these occupation positions surrounded by searchlights and barbed wire, with their immoral nature, are bathed in the splendour transmitted by these hills over which advance infinite clusters of olive trees. Converging in turn with the streamlined peaks stretching to the distant sea. Above its bright, shimmering waters another sky gently touches that iridescent, red copper twilight of the evening.

A sea, whose shimmering shadows we only glimpse from afar, because it remains hidden in the direction of the beach, which we are forbidden from reaching. Yet we never tire of gazing towards it whenever possible, making walking to it evidence of nostalgia. We use as a pretext the search for the flowers which the desert bears at this time of year. Scarlet anemones and rosy-lilac gazelles' horns, or yel-